

Dumont Dunes TRT
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 6, 2007

Bureau of Land Management
Barstow Field Office
Conference Room
2601 Barstow Road
Barstow, CA 92311
(760) 252-6000

1. Call to Order

TRT Chairman Bill Presch called the meeting to order at 10:05 am and led the TRT in a recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

A. Introductions

Members of the TRT and participating BLM staff introduced themselves:

TRT Members Present:

Dr. William Presch, chairman; California Desert District Advisory Council

Jim Bramham, vice chairman; OHV organizations

Randy Banis, secretary; other motorized recreation

Terry Allen, Nevada OHV interests (via speakerphone)

David Charlton, California Desert District Advisory Council

Sheri Davis, commercial filming, California Desert District Advisory Council

Ron Schiller, California Desert District Advisory Council

Kathleen Stosuy, California OHV interests

Ed Waldheim, California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission

John Dalgleish, Friends of Dumont Dunes

BLM Staff Present:

Roxie Trost, Manager, Barstow Field Office

Lynnette Elser, Recreation Chief, Barstow Field Office

Dan Briot, Chief Ranger, Barstow Field Office

Members of the General Public Present:

R.B. Buchanan, Friends of Dumont Dunes

Bob Cox, Dumont Dunes Riders

Andy Cunningham, California Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs

David DiNicola, DDR

David Jackson

Jennifer Nielson, DDR

Heidi Ulrich, DDR

Roy Ulrich, DDR

Vicki Warren, FODD

Mike Woods, OHV Representative, Marine Corps Logistics Base, Barstow

TRT Members Absent:
Gerry Hillier, San Bernardino County

B. Agenda

Bill Presch opened the agenda to additions or changes. Roxie Trost requested that discussions regarding the proposed fee increase be moved to the beginning of the agenda. Randy Banis requested an opportunity to speak under Reports. The agenda was approved by consent.

C. Minutes

Copies of the draft minutes of the TRT's November 28, 2006, meeting were circulated earlier via email, and additional copies were not prepared for the meeting. Randy Banis reported that only John Dalgleish submitted corrections, which was that his attendance was in person and not via telephone. Ron Schiller asked that Randy forward another copy to him. There were no additional corrections or changes and the minutes were accepted by consent.

2. Old Business

A. Funding for Dumont Dunes

Roxie Trost began by reviewing funding in the past, which was a mix of user fees, appropriated funds, and funds from the California Off Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission "green sticker" grants. Ed Waldheim described the loss of OHMVR funds as a consequence of the last minute rescoring of key grant applications by the Commission for political objectives rather than on the ground need.

Roxie continued that appropriated funds have also been cut, and made worse by a Congressional earmark that half of recreation funding go to law enforcement. Finally, in the end, user fees account for only a small portion of operating funds for Dumont Dunes. When asked about funding for the water crossing improvement project, Roxie said that the money has been set aside.

Lynnette Elser added that OHMVR funds will run out in July, leaving user fees as the sole source of funding for Dumont Dunes. When asked about appropriated funds, Lynnette reported that the Field Office receives \$300,000, with \$100,000 earmarked for law enforcement. This leaves only \$200,000 for the rest of the Field Office operations, not enough to help fund for Dumont Dunes. Lynnette also explained the need to have two staff people present for emergencies. Finally, Lynnette distributed and reviewed a detailed report of FY06 expenses charged against fees.

A guest noted the \$1,000 expense for medical supplies and asked if the BLM sought reimbursement for medical supplies used in their rescue or treatment, to which Lynnette responded that they did not.

Lynnette discussed holiday travel and lodging expenses for fire and law enforcement. John Dalglish and Terry Allen asked about the possibility of providing additional trailers. Lynnette explained that hotels are a better alternative to travel, particularly when including safety concerns. As for on site trailers, there are significant costs with having to bring in food and other needs. Staying in Pahrump's motels is less expensive to the BLM than staying in those of Baker.

While reviewing the expenses for utilities and vehicles, Lynnette was asked about water truck expenses. She explained that Dumont Dunes pays a portion of taxes, registration and insurance back to Friends of El Mirage because they actually paid for and own the water trucks.

Ed Waldheim circulated and reviewed an expanded Dumont Dunes budget in a format used by some land managers seeking funding through the OHMVR grant process. The document organized some of the financial details differently than the BLM report, but the two essentially balanced in overall expenses and income.

Vicki Warren and Terry Allen pointed out the growing congestion leaving Dumont Dunes on busy weekends and questioned if multiple permit types might contribute to the problem. Another guest suggested making improvements in the flow of traffic during exits by putting greater burden on the user to have their pass already displayed.

Additional guests also objected to the proposed three tier pass. Roxie explained that the proposal was attempting to meet requests from users. Terry stated that failing to accommodate that particular request would not cause any users to stay away.

Vicki asked if Dumont Dunes had ever ran on a balanced budget. Roxie answered that it had for several years, and that the new Recreation Enhancement Act requires them to focus even more on cost recovery. Vicki also asked how vendor fees were handled, and Lynnette answered that the BLM currently pays for the recreation planners from vendor permit revenue and not from Dumont Dunes. Ron Schiller requested that Roxie provide him the regulations that apply to vendor permits at Dumont Dunes.

Terry Allen moved that vendors who recreate while at Dumont Dunes also must pay for a recreation pass. John Dalglish seconded the motion. Bill Presch offered that the presence of vendors is not integral to recreation and that the profits from vendors is not necessary to operations. Terry suggested that film crews also should pay in that all that use the dunes should pay their fair share. Roxie explained that filming permit fees go to the field office to support the film program.

Bill Presch summarized the discussions and supported requiring vendors who recreate to purchase a recreation pass. Jim Bramham suggested that vendors' employees should have a pass, and Roxie agreed that this might solve some problems. Jim expressed his belief that only primary vending needs are covered by a vendor permit, whereas camping and other recreational activities should require them to purchase a recreation permit.

Randy Banis asked if vendor permits specify how many vehicles or personnel will be involved, and suggested that anything above and beyond the terms of the vendor permit should require a recreation pass.

Bill reminded the group that a motion was still on the floor, to which John withdrew his second causing the motion to die for lack of a second. John then made a new motion that only the primary vending vehicle be covered by the vendor permit and that any additional vehicles would be subject to a recreation pass. Jim seconded the motion.

Lynnette Elser cautioned that vending permits are subject to specific regulations and was unsure how the motion might conflict with them. Bill offered a friendly amendment that should the regulations allow it, every vehicle in the vending party must have a permit; otherwise, only the primary vending vehicle would be covered for access and all others must have a permit. The friendly amendment was accepted.

The motion passed without objection or abstentions. Bill recessed the meeting for lunch at 12:00 noon.

At 12:30 p.m. Bill called the meeting to order and summarized the discussions. He also reviewed plans for the water crossing improvements and the proposed helipad.

Randy Banis moved that the TRT recommend a fee of \$120 for an annual pass, and \$40 for a seven day pass, resulting in a projected surplus of \$67, 798. Ed Waldheim seconded the motion.

Roxie clarified that the helipad funding comes from the federal level and was granted specifically for the project. User fees are not involved with this project. John Dalglish asked if maintenance costs might increase with the helipad, and Roxie responded that it would, but did not know how much. Randy asked if having a helipad would require any additional staffing, and Lynnette answered that it would not. Guests questioned any increase in maintenance expenses due to the helipad when the message is to cut costs. Roxie stressed her belief that the helipad project was important, and went on to agree that cost cutting is an option.

Ed Waldheim suggested that the group begin discussions with the question “what do we want to pay?”, then see what we can do with this level of revenue. Randy stressed the need to continue applying for OHMVR grants. Randy asked if savings for less law enforcement officer presence during summer was reflected in the BLM’s budget, and Lynnette replied that it was.

Jim restated Ed’s point about starting with a total, then see what can be afforded. A guest suggested a 2nd tier price of \$35, resulting in need to cut approximately \$60,000. A guest suggested keeping the pass to seven days rather than ten days so that only one weekend is covered. Ed suggested that the TRT consider what is being discussed for El Mirage, which is a per vehicle fee. A guest cautioned the TRT against piling on fees, and

suggested that if the fee was \$20 per quad, including green sticker fees, it might be as high as \$220 per year for five quads for a typical family of users.

Vicki expressed that it would be difficult selling such an increase to users, and discussed the importance of fully and better informing users of the specifics regarding the sudden loss of revenue sources.

A guest suggested a surcharge for the major holiday weekends. Vicki suggested \$90 for an annual permit, with a \$10 surcharge on the major holiday weekends. A guest suggested that surcharges and increases would result in fewer paying customers.

Randy Banis commented on the importance of having a day pass to accommodate casual users. Randy further requested clarification regarding the T&T rail bed, which forms the Eastern boundary of the permit area, and requested that through travel along this designated route not require a recreation permit.

Bill Presch recapped the options and suggested that the current motion be withdrawn so that a new motion could reach the floor. The group collectively moved the following recommended fee structure which reflects the significant expenses associated with the holiday weekends:

Annual Pass: Full Access \$120 Non-Holiday Access \$90 Holiday Surcharge \$10
Seven Day Pass: Holiday \$40 Non-Holiday \$30

The motion was approved by consent.

B. Water for Water Trucks

Roxie Trost explained the concerns of some within the environmental community that the use of water from the Amargosa River might be affecting the river. As a result, the BLM purchased water from Shoshone at a rate of one truck per hour. Over time, Shoshone limited this to one truck every two hours. Not only was this insufficient, but the long haul created a safety issue for the water trucks, as well. As a result, Roxie said that she would look at a range of options, including reviewing water rights, drilling a well, or getting water at Baker.

C. Road Test

Roxie described how the BLM used a dust palliative on the road during Presidents Day weekend. Unfortunately, the gravel that is the source of the road bed materials contains too much dust and, therefore, the palliative did not work.

D. Trash Update

The trash issues with the local communities are still not resolved, reported Roxie. She recently learned about N2Dirt and their opportunities for funding education programs on subjects like this and suggested that she look into it.

A guest expressed support for a “carry in, carry out” policy over providing bins, but did recognize that non-compliance is still a problem. The guest stated that they observe too much trash in the dunes following special events, but stated that BLM has clamped down recently.

E. Miscellaneous

Lynnette Elser discussed a request for a permit to install lights at Competition Hill at the Dunes, and reported that she denied the application for a variety of reasons, particularly due to feasibility and user safety. The TRT concurred with her decision.

Ed Waldheim said that he wanted the Friends of Dumont Dunes flyers distributed by the fee booth vendor. Roxie stated that she was working to get the contractor to increase staffing on holiday weekends.

Lynnette said that the BLM sent representatives to the Off Road Impact Trade Show, but reported that those attending were less interested in land use than purchasing parts. She suggested that it might not be worth participating next year.

E. BLM MOU with Friends of Dumont Dunes

Ed Waldheim provided a copy of the BLM’s Memorandum of Understanding with the Friends of El Mirage as a sample for a similar agreement for the Friends of Dumont Dunes. He urged that an official agreement be entered into right away.

3. Members’ Items

A. Randy Banis

Randy reported that the page for the TRT was live on the BLM web site. The TRT web page includes a roster and all minutes. On February 20th Randy gave an hour long presentation on Dumont Dunes to the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert at the Maturango Museum in Ridgecrest. Randy joined Ed in Washington, D.C. and met with Congressman Kevin McCarthy and staff from Congressman Buck McKeon’s office, and from both Senators Boxer and Feinstein’s offices. Of particular concern was the effect of the new wilderness bill, S. 493, on motorized recreation at Dumont Dunes.

B. Jim Bramham

Jim reported on OHV registration issues in Arizona. Arizona permits will still be accepted despite published information to the contrary. Because both Arizona and California have OHV licensing programs, reciprocity is allowed.

C. Ed Waldheim

Ed distributed the new NOHVCC book which focuses on OHV management as the answer to the current problems.

Bureau of Land Management, Dumont Dunes TRT
March 6, 2007 Minutes

4. Next Meeting

By consent, the TRT set the following date, time and location for its next public meeting:
Tuesday, April 17, 2007, 10:00 AM
BLM Barstow Field Office Conference Room

A guest suggested adding to the next agenda a discussion on the practice of camp racing at the dunes.

5. Adjournment

By consent, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Randy Banis
Secretary, Dumont Dunes Technical Review Team

APPROVED on April 17, 2007

SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

Motion relative to requiring recreation permits for vendors

Should the regulations allow it, every vehicle in the vending party must have a permit; otherwise, only the primary vending vehicle would be covered for access and all others must have a permit. Ron Schiller requested that Roxie provide him the regulations that apply to vendor permits at Dumont Dunes.

User Fee Increase

The group collectively moved the following recommended fee structure:

Annual Pass: Full Access \$120 Non-Holiday Access \$90 Holiday Surcharge \$10
Seven Day Pass: Holiday \$40 Non-Holiday \$30

The motion was approved by consent.

Water Supply for Water Trucks

Roxie said that she would look at a range of options, including looking at water rights, drilling a well, and getting water at Baker.

Increased Staff at Fee Booth on Holiday Weekends

Roxie stated that she was working to get the contractor to increase staffing on holiday weekends.

BLM MOU with Friends of Dumont Dunes

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Next Meeting

By consent, the TRT set the following date, time and location for its next public meeting: Tuesday, April 17, 2007, 10:00 AM, BLM Barstow Field Office Conference Room.